

## **ARTICLE 1**

### **GENERAL PROVISIONS**

#### **Part 3 Definitions**

##### **Sec. 54-120. Definitions.**

**Sign.** Any device or representation for visual communication that is used for the purpose of bringing the subject thereof to the attention of others which is located on or attached to premises, real property, structures on real property, or a vehicle, and which is visible from a public street or way.

##### **Types of Signs.**

**Abandoned Sign.** A sign which was erected on property in conjunction with a particular use which has been discontinued for a period of ninety (90) days or more, or a sign the content of which pertains to a time, event or purpose which no longer applies.

**Canopy Sign.** A sign which is suspended from, attached to, supported from or forms a part of a canopy.

**Dilapidated Sign.** Any sign which is insecure or otherwise structurally unsound, has defective parts in the support, braces, guys and/or anchors or which is unable to withstand the wind pressure for which it was originally designed.

**Directional and Warning Sign.** (a) A traffic, directional or informational sign, permanently erected in the public right-of-way or on private property by a governmental agency and permitted signs in public rights-of-way; (b) off-premises signs which contain information regarding the time and place of regular meetings of civic or religious groups; and/or (c) an on-premises permanent sign located at the curb cuts of a commercial, industrial, or office establishment giving direction or information as to matters as entrance, exit or the like. These signs may contain a logo or other information identifying the use of the premises, so long as such information is for direction and not advertising purposes.

**Directory Sign.** A sign listing only the names and/or use, or location of more than one business, activity or professional office conducted within a building, group of buildings or commercial center.

**Flashing Sign.** Any lighted or electrical sign which emits light in sudden transitory bursts. On/off time and temperature signs and message boards are not considered flashing signs for the purpose of this ordinance.

**Freestanding Sign.** A sign, not including sandwich boards, supported by a sign structure secured in the ground and which is wholly independent of any building, other than the sign structure, for support.

**Illuminated Sign.** A sign designed to give forth artificial light or to reflect such light from an artificial source.

**Institutional Signs.** On-premises signs which identify the name of an institution, such as a church, school, hospital, club, museum, a civic, fraternal or charitable organization, or similar entity and which describe the activities thereof.

**Moving Message Board.** Any electrical sign having a continuous message flow across its face by utilization of lights or other electrical impulses forming various words or designs.

**Off-premises Sign.** A sign identifying, advertising or directing the public to a business or commercial activity located on property other than where the sign is located.

**On-premises Sign.** A sign which (a) identifies, advertises or directs the public to a use, occupancy, function, service or product which is sold or manufactured on the property where the sign is located or at the site of a commercial, industrial or office development where the sign is located or (b) identifies, advertises or directs attention to a venture or message of a non-commercial or not-for-profit nature regardless of the location of such venture or message.

**Portable Sign.** Any sign, except a sidewalk/sandwich board sign, which is not permanently affixed to a building, structure or the ground.

**Project Sign.** Any sign erected and maintained on the premises temporarily while undergoing construction by an architect, contractor, developer, finance organization, subcontractor or materials vendor upon which property such individual is furnishing labor, services or material.

**Reader Board.** That portion of a sign face that allows for interchangeable letters, usually placed below the identification portion of the sign face. Reader boards are to be included in the calculation of the allowed sign size of a particular establishment.

**Real Estate Sign.** A temporary sign advertising the real property upon which the sign is located for rent, for lease, or for sale and providing the name and location of the owner or his agent.

**Roof Sign.** A sign erected over or on, and wholly or partially dependent upon, the roof of any building for support, or attached to the roof in any way.

**Sandwich Board Sign.** A freestanding movable sign, not secured or attached to the ground or any building or structure, composed of a sign panel and supporting

structure or one or more panels which form both the structure and sign face, and which is intended to be placed in a sidewalk or pedestrian way.

Sign Band. A panel, either permanently affixed to or removable from a building façade, which is designed specifically to accommodate sign letters or graphics.

Snipe Sign. A sign which is tacked, nailed, posted, pasted, glued or otherwise attached to trees, poles, stakes or fences, or to other objects, and the advertising matter appearing thereon is not applicable to the present use of the premises upon which such sign is located.

Special Event Sign. A sign which carries a message regarding a special event or function which is of general interest to the community, such as historic, ethnic, cultural, religious, political or similar activities.

Temporary Sign. Any sign or information transmitting structure intended to be erected or displayed for a limited period, or any sign towed behind an aircraft.

Vehicle Sign. A permanent or temporary sign affixed, painted on, or placed in or upon any parked vehicle, parked trailer or other parked device capable of being towed, which is displayed in public view under such circumstances as to location on the premises, time of day, duration, availability of other parking space on the premises, and the proximity of the vehicle to the area on the premises where it is loaded, unloaded or otherwise carries out its principal function, which circumstances indicate that the primary purpose of said display is to attract the attention of the public rather than to serve the business of the owner thereof in the manner which is customary for said vehicle.

Window Sign. Any sign which is permanently painted on, applied to, attached to or projected upon the glass area of a building, including doors, whose identification, message, symbol, insignia, visual representation, logo type, or any other form which communicates information is intended to be read from off-premises, contiguous property or a public right-of-way.

## ARTICLE 4 SIGN REGULATIONS

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### **PART 1 GENERALLY**

#### **Sec. 54-401. Intent.**

The purpose of this Article is to provide comprehensive regulations for signs within the city to eliminate confusing, distracting and unsafe signs; assure the efficient transfer of information; and, enhance the visual environment of the city. It is declared that the regulation of signs within the city is necessary and in the public interest:

- a. to protect property values within the city;
- b. to promote and aid in the tourist industry which is declared to be of importance to the economy of the city;
- c. to protect the general public from damage or injury caused by, or partially attributable to the distractions and obstructions which result from improperly designed or situated signs;
- d. to provide a pleasing overall environmental setting and community appearance which is vital to tourism and to the continued economic attractiveness of the city;
- e. to improve the legibility and effectiveness of signs;
- f. to allow signs appropriate to the planned character of each zoning district within the city; and
- g. to promote the public safety, welfare, convenience and enjoyment of the unique historic character of the city.

(Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07)

#### **Sec. 54-402. Applicability of regulations.**

a. No signs which are visible from a public street or way, except signs exempted by Sections 54-405 and 54-411 shall be erected, altered, moved, repaired or replaced within the city until a zoning permit has been granted by the zoning administrator and a building permit has been issued by the chief building inspector as certification that the requirements of this Chapter have been satisfied and that all fees have been paid. The zoning administrator may order the removal of any sign which, after a permit has been obtained, is not constructed in accordance with this Chapter.

b. The jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review and Commercial Corridor Design Review Board. This Article shall not affect the jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review and the Commercial Corridor Design Review Board to consider and act on applications for signage on premises within its jurisdiction, and nothing herein shall be construed to accord to an applicant a right to a sign of a particular design, size, height or number thereof on premises within the jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review and the Commercial Corridor Design Review Board. See Appendix L for Sign Design Guidelines pertaining to the jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review. See

Appendix M for Sign Design Guidelines pertaining to the jurisdiction of the Commercial Corridor Design Review Board.

c. Highway Advertising Control Act. Nothing herein shall be construed to in any way prohibit or relieve the city or owners of property within the corporate limits of the city from any duties, responsibilities or obligations imposed upon it or them by virtue of the terms of the Highway Advertising Control Act, as codified by Section 57-25-10 through and including 57-25-220 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina (1976), as amended. (Ord. No. 2004-78, §§ 1--3, 8-17-04; Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07)

### **Sec. 54-403. General requirements.**

a. Height of sign. The height of a sign shall be the vertical distance measured from the adjacent average elevation of the natural grade to the top of the sign face or sign structure, whichever is higher.

b. Calculation of sign area. Sign area shall be calculated as the entire area within a rectangle enclosing the extreme limits of the sign face, including any frame or border. The area of a sign composed of individual letters, numerals or other devices shall equal the area of the smallest rectangle or square encompassing said letters or devices.

c. Sign face. Sign face shall be that part of the sign that is or can be used to identify, advertise or communicate information or for visual representation which attracts the attention of the public for any purpose. Sign face includes any background material, panel, trim, color and direct or self-illumination used that differentiates the sign from the building, structure, backdrop surface or object upon which or against which it is placed. The sign structure shall not be included as a portion of the sign face provided that no message, symbol or any of the aforementioned sign face criteria are displayed on or designed as part of the sign structure.

(Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07)

## **PART 2 PROHIBITED AND EXEMPT SIGNS**

### **Sec. 54-404. Prohibited signs.**

The following signs are prohibited:

a. snipe sign;

**GRAPHIC LINK:** [Click here](#)

b. sandwich board and pedestal signs, except as provided in Sections 54-414 (e) and 54-415 (g);

c. off-premises signs, except billboards as provided in Section 54-420;

d. a sign which contains any flashing or animated lights, gives the appearance of animation or movement;

e. a sign which utilizes individual bulbs or electronic means to produce a message, excluding time and temperature signs; except that school facilities which occupy at least eight (8) acres may utilize electronic message boards as part of their allowed signage provided that 1) the electronic message board does not contain flashing messages, and 2) the electronic message board does not exceed 50 percent of the allowed sign face area; and accommodations uses on commercially zoned properties located wholly or partially within a quarter mile (1,320 feet) of the intersection of the center-lines of the rights-of-way of Highway 17/Savannah Highway and Interstate I-526 may utilize an electronic message board as part of their allowed free-standing signage provided that 1) the electronic message board does not contain flashing or scrolling messages, 2) the size of the electronic message board is restricted to a maximum of 60 square feet per

sign face, and 3) the electronic message board is restricted to a maximum of two sign faces.

- f. any sign that projects above the peak of a roof;
- g. vehicle signs and signs which are pulled behind a vehicle, motorcycle, all terrain vehicle, golf cart, low speed vehicle, moped, scooter, motor driven cycle, or bicycle;
- h. any sign which emits a sound, odor or visible matter;
- i. any sign which obstructs free ingress/egress from a required door, window, fire escape or other required exit way;

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

- j. any sign and/or sign structure which obstructs the view of, may be confused with or purports to be a governmental or traffic direction/safety sign;
- k. signs using the words "stop," "danger" or any other word, phrase, symbol or character in a manner that might reasonably mislead, confuse or distract a vehicle driver;
- l. except as otherwise provided, no sign whether temporary or permanent, except by a public agency or with the approval of the city and upon issuance of an encroachment permit by the city's Public Works and Utility Committee, is permitted within any street right-of-way;
- m. signs painted on or attached to trees, rocks or other natural features, telephone or utility poles;
- n. no sign of any kind shall be erected or displayed in any salt marsh areas or on any land subject to periodic inundation by tidal salt water;
- o. abandoned or dilapidated signs;
- p. portable and temporary signs, except as provided in Section 54-411;
- q. signs in residential districts advertising commercial uses, except institutional signs and signs advertising non-conforming uses or uses otherwise approved by variance or special exception;
- r. fluttering signs, e.g., pennants, balloons and ribbons, except those as provided in Section 54-411;
- s. banners, except those as provided in Sections 54-405 (e) and 54-411;
- t. gas filled figures;
- u. flags containing text or graphics advertising a business, service or product; and
- v. television or computer monitors, located either indoors or outdoors, which are oriented towards a public right of way for the purpose of producing a commercial message or image.

(Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07; Ord. No. 2009-27, § 1, 2-24-09; Ord. No. 2009-123, § 1, 8-18-09)

#### **Sec. 54-405. Exempt signs.**

The following signs are exempt from the regulations of this ordinance, provided they are not located within the public right-of-way without an encroachment agreement:

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

- a. flags, except those as prohibited in Section 54-404 (u);
- b. special event flags, banners, pennants, balloons and ribbons as provided in Section 54-411 (e-f);
- c. street banners as provided in Section 54-411 (c);
- d. real estate banners as provided in Section 54-411 (d);
- e. banners of a unique quality or design which are integral to the architectural design of a building as approved by either the Board of Architectural Review or the Commercial Corridor Design Review Board within their respective districts.
- f. political (see Section 19-441 of the Code of the City of Charleston);

- g. official notices posted by any court, public agency or officer;
- h. historic plaques; and
- i. traffic, directional, warning or informational signs authorized by any public agency.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

(Ord. No. 2004-69, § 1, 7-20-04; Ord. No. 2006-153, § 1, 5-2-06; Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07; Ord. No. 2009-08, § 1, 1-13-09)

Secs. 54-406--54-409. Reserved.

## **PART 3 SIGN REGULATIONS**

### **Sec. 54-410. Provisions applicable to all signs.**

- a. Setback from right-of-way. All freestanding signs shall be located on private property and shall not be located within the vision clearance triangle at street intersections.
- b. Light sources to illuminate signs shall be shielded from all adjacent residential buildings and streets and shall not be of such brightness so as to cause glare hazardous to pedestrians or automobile drivers or so as to create a nuisance to adjacent residential districts.
- c. Signs shall not have light reflecting background, but may use light reflecting lettering. (Ord. No. 2006-09, § 1, 1-10-06; Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07)

### **Sec. 54-411. Temporary signs within all zoning districts.**

- a. The following signs shall require the issuance of a Temporary Sign Permit by the zoning administrator prior to their erection. The permit shall cite the length of time any such sign may be displayed.
  - 1. Temporary and seasonal produce stands. The total area of all such signs shall not exceed twenty (20) square feet, nor shall any sign exceed ten (10) feet in height.
  - 2. Temporary signs announcing a civic, philanthropic, educational or religious event. Such signs shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet per sign face or eight (8) feet in height. Such signs shall not be erected more than fourteen (14) days prior to the event and shall be removed within five (5) days after the event.
- b. Real estate or project signs shall be allowed without a permit provided the following restrictions for the type of sign used are met:
  - 1. Individual single-family and duplex lots or units: For single-family or duplex residential lots or units, one (1) real estate sign, not exceeding three (3) square feet in sign area per face and six (6) square feet in total sign area, and, if freestanding, not exceeding three (3) feet in height, shall be permitted per lot. Property with two (2) or more street frontages shall be permitted one (1) additional sign per frontage. If a framed metal freestanding sign is not used, then a single post sign may be used.
  - 2. Single-Family Subdivisions, Multi-Family Developments, Commercial Developments and Industrial Developments:
    - (a) For multi-family developments containing fewer than eight (8) units, one (1) real estate sign, not exceeding sixteen (16) square feet in sign area per face and thirty two (32) square feet in total sign area, and, if freestanding, not exceeding eight (8) feet in height, shall be permitted. Property with two (2) or more street frontages shall be permitted one (1) additional sign per frontage.
    - (b) For single-family subdivisions, multi-family developments containing eight (8) or more units, commercial, and industrial developments, one (1) real estate or project sign not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet in sign area per face and sixty-four (64) square feet in total sign area, and, if freestanding, not exceeding eight (8) feet in height, shall be



permitted. Property with two (2) or more street frontages shall be permitted one (1) additional sign per frontage.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[temporary signs-1](#)

3. Project signs shall not be erected prior to issuance of a building permit and shall be removed prior to issuance of the final certificate of occupancy.

4. Real estate signs shall be removed within thirty (30) days of the rent, sale or lease of a property.

c. Street banners advertising special events may be erected over a public right of way by the City of Charleston's Department of Traffic and Transportation, with a permit issued by the aforementioned department.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[temporary signs-2](#)

d. In lieu of a project sign or real estate sign as described in paragraph b above, banners associated with the opening of a new residential community, business or institution may be erected without a permit. Said banners may be in place for up to thirty (30) days from the date of the initial opening. Banner signs used in this manner shall be restricted to one banner at each entrance to the development, not to exceed forty-eight (48) square feet in size for each banner. Banners are to be attached to a permanent structure, such as a building or fence and not temporary supports, trees, automobiles or etcetera.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[temporary signs-3](#)

e. Flags, pennants, banners, balloons, ribbons and other aerial devices used for special events and festivals sponsored by the City of Charleston or a non profit agency may be erected without a permit by the City of Charleston and shall be removed within five (5) days after the event.

f. Flags, pennants, banners, balloons, ribbons and other aerial devices may be erected without a permit by a resident within any residential district so long as they do not contain text or graphics advertising a business or service.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[temporary signs-4](#)

g. Temporary window signs shall be allowed without a permit provided that they, along with any permanent window signs, cover no more than 20% of any single window area and shall be in place for no more than sixty (60) days.

(Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07)

**Sec. 54-412. Regulations for signs within the Savannah Highway Overlay Zone and Residential Office, RO District.**

In the Savannah Highway Overlay Zone and Residential Office District only the following signs shall be permitted.

a. Freestanding Signs: One double-faced, monument style sign shall be allowed per lot with a maximum of twelve (12) square feet in area per side and not to exceed five (5) feet in height; and

b. Illumination of Freestanding Signs: Monument signs may be illuminated internally or with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. The use of plastic sign faces is prohibited.

c. All other sign types: The use of façade signs, right angle signs, reader boards, window signs, awning/canopy signs, wall/fence signs, sandwich board signs, kiosk/directory signs and directional/warning signs is prohibited.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[overlay zone and residential office](#)

(Ord. No. 1998-112, § 3, 5-26-98; Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07)



**Sec. 54-413. Regulations for signs within the Commercial Transitional, CT District.**

In the Commercial Transitional District only the following signs shall be permitted.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

- a. Freestanding Signs: One double-faced, monument style sign shall be allowed per lot with a maximum of twelve (12) square feet in area per side and not to exceed five (5) feet in height; and
- b. Illumination of Freestanding Signs: Monument signs may be illuminated internally or with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. The use of plastic sign faces is prohibited.
- c. Façade Signs: One (1) non-illuminated façade sign, not exceeding nine (9) square feet is allowed per business unit.
- d. Window signs shall be permitted as follows:
  1. In addition to signage permitted under "Façade Signs," window signs may be displayed provided no more than twenty (20) percent of any single window area is covered by such signage.
  2. Window signs are to be limited to ground floor windows and/or businesses.
- e. Awning and Canopy Signs shall be permitted as follows:
  1. Awning and canopy signs shall not exceed twenty (20) percent of a single surface area of a canopy or awning.
  2. Translucent internally illuminated awnings and canopies are not permitted.
  3. Awnings shall fit over only the opening it covers and not extend across the entire façade.
- f. Right Angle Signs: One right angle sign shall be permitted per business unit as follows:
  1. Right angle signs shall not exceed nine (9) square feet per face.
  2. On a single façade, right angle signs are not permitted in conjunction with façade signs.
  3. Right angle signs are not to be illuminated.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

- g. All other sign types: The use of reader boards (except as provided in Section 54-415 (l)), wall/fence signs, sandwich board signs, kiosk/directory signs and directional/warning signs are prohibited.

(Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07; Ord. No. 2009-08, § 2, 1-13-09)

**Sec. 54-414. Regulations for signs within the Daniel Island Town Center DITC, Gathering Place, GP District and Neighborhood, N District.**

In the Daniel Island Town Center, Gathering Place District and Neighborhood District only the following signs shall be permitted:

- a. Freestanding signs shall be permitted as follows:
  1. One double-faced monument style shall be allowed per lot with a maximum of twelve (12) square feet in area per side and not exceeding five (5) feet in height.
  2. Monument signs may be illuminated internally or with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. The use of plastic sign faces is prohibited.
- b. Façade Signs shall be permitted as follows:
  1. Façade Signs for businesses or uses occupying the ground floor of a multi-story building shall be permitted as follows:
    - (a) Sign faces shall not occupy more than ten (10) percent per ground floor facade of the building.

- (b) Façade signs shall not be located above the ground floor level of a multi-story building with the exception of those signs identifying the name of a building.
- (c) Sign faces shall have a vertical dimension of no more than two thirds (2/3) of the vertical dimension of a single uninterrupted wall plane, surface, or sign band.”
2. Façade Signs for businesses or uses occupying a space above the ground floor of a multi-story building shall be permitted as follows:
- (a) For buildings with three (3) or fewer business spaces above the ground floor of a multi-story building, one (1) façade sign, not exceeding one (1) square foot, is allowed per business unit occupying a space above the ground floor level.
- (b) Façade signs shall be located at the ground floor building entrance providing access to the business unit above the ground floor level of a multi-story building.
3. Where more than one (1) business or use occupies a single building, each separate business occupying a space may erect signage whose sign faces shall conform with the requirements of paragraphs 1 and 2 above.
4. Façade signs shall be limited to the following locations:
- (a) On any façade which contains a building entrance accessible to the general public.
- (b) On any façade which parallels a public street or public right-of-way providing driveway access to the parcel.
- GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)
5. Façade signs shall not to be internally illuminated.
- GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)
- c. Window signs shall be permitted as follows:
1. Window signs may be displayed provided no more than twenty (20) percent of any single window area is covered by such signage.
2. Window signs are to be limited to ground floor windows and/or businesses. However, businesses occupying a unit above the ground floor level of a multi-story building may display window signs at the ground floor building entrance providing they conform with the requirements of paragraph 1 above.
3. Window signs shall not be illuminated.
- d. Awning and Canopy Signs shall be permitted as follows:
- GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)
1. Awning signs shall be limited to the awning valance only and are not permitted on the slope of the awning. Awning text and/or graphics shall have a vertical dimension of no more than two thirds (2/3) of the vertical dimension of the awning valance.
2. Canopy signs shall be allowed on the face of the canopy; canopy text and/or graphics shall have a vertical dimension of no more than two thirds (2/3) of the vertical dimension of the canopy face. Canopy signs shall be allowed on the top of a canopy; canopy text and/or graphics shall have a vertical dimension of no more than sixteen (16) inches.
3. Translucent internally illuminated awnings and canopies are not permitted.
4. Awnings shall fit over only the opening it covers and not extend across the entire façade.
- e. Right Angle Signs for Individual Business Units: One right angle sign shall be permitted per business unit occupying the ground floor of a single story or multi-story building as follows:
1. Right angle signs shall not exceed nine (9) square feet per face.
- f. Right Angle Signs in lieu of a Freestanding Sign: One right angle sign shall be permitted, in addition to right angle sign(s) permitted in paragraph e. above, per development as follows:
1. A right angle sign is not permitted in conjunction with a freestanding, wall or fence sign.

2. A right angle sign shall not contain any information other than the name, address or logo of the development. A right angle sign shall not be used as a multi-tenant sign.
3. A right angle sign shall not exceed eighteen (18) square feet per face.
4. A right angle sign shall have a vertical dimension of no more than one half (1/2) of the vertical dimension of a building facade.

g. Wall or fence signs shall be permitted as follows:

1. Sign(s) attached to a wall or fence shall be considered a freestanding sign. One (1) wall or fence sign may be erected in lieu of a freestanding sign. When a development fronts on two or more streets, one (1) additional wall or fence sign, in lieu of a freestanding sign, shall be permitted per street, provided however said street(s) have a driveway access.
2. The sign face of a wall or street sign shall not exceed twelve (12) square feet in area.
3. Wall and fence signs may be illuminated with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. Internal illumination is prohibited.

h. Sandwich board signs for businesses occupying the ground floor of a building shall be permitted as follows:

**GRAPHIC LINK:** [Click here](#)

1. Sandwich board signs on private property are allowed without a permit provided they meet the requirements as follows:

(a) Only one sandwich board sign shall be allowed for any single building; provided, however, that where more than one (1) business occupies a building, each ground floor business may have a sandwich board sign.

(b) No sandwich board signs shall exceed twenty-four (24) inches in width or thirty-six (36) inches in height.

(c) Such property shall not be entitled to any other freestanding signage.

2. Sandwich board signs within a public right-of-way shall be permitted as follows:

(a) Sandwich board signs shall conform with the requirements of paragraphs a and b above.

(b) Sandwich board signs shall only be permitted on a sidewalk with a minimum width of ten (10) feet.

(c) Sandwich board signs shall maintain a clear pedestrian path on the sidewalk of five (5) feet minimum at all times. This area shall be free of any obstructions such as trees, tree wells, parking meters and the like in order to allow adequate pedestrian movement.

(d) Sandwich board signs shall not interfere with any utilities or other facilities such as fire hydrants, street signs, parking meters, mailboxes or benches located on the sidewalk or in the public right-of-way.

(e) Sandwich board signs shall not impinge on any required clear distances for maneuvering around building entrances and exits.

(f) A sandwich board sign must be located directly in front of the ground floor business unit for which it serves.

(g) Sandwich board signs within a public right-of-way shall require an encroachment permit issued by the City of Charleston Department of Public Services.

i. Freestanding directory signs shall be permitted for multi-tenant shopping centers as follows:

1. Such directory signs shall be for directory information purposes only.

2. The area of the directory sign shall not exceed twelve (12) square feet per face and five (5) feet in height.

3. One (1) directory sign shall be permitted per driveway entrance.

4. Directory signs shall not be illuminated.

5. Such directory signs shall be for the use of internal business units only and shall not be for the use of business units fronting on a public right-of-way.

6. A freestanding directory sign is not permitted in conjunction with a freestanding, wall or fence sign.

j. Building entrance directory signs shall be permitted for multi-tenant buildings as follows:

1. Such directory signs shall be for directory information purposes only.
2. The area of the directory sign shall not exceed four (4) square feet.
3. One (1) directory sign shall be permitted per building entrance.
4. Directory signs shall not be illuminated.
5. Directory signs may be affixed to the building façade or freestanding and shall be located immediately adjacent to a building entrance.
6. Such directory signs shall be for the use of internal business units only and shall not be for the use of business units fronting on a public right-of-way.

k. The use of multiple signs shall be permitted as follows:

1. Businesses or uses occupying the ground floor of a multi story building shall be limited to two of the following signs per building façade: façade sign, window sign, awning sign, canopy sign and right angle sign.
2. Businesses or uses occupying a space above the ground floor of a multi-story building shall be limited to one of the following signs per ground floor building entrance: façade sign, window sign and building entrance directory sign.

l. All other sign types: The use of reader boards (except as provided in Section 54-415 (a, 5, c)), and directional/warning signs is prohibited.

(Ord. No. 2006-09, § 2, 1-10-06; Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07; Ord. No. 2008-57, § 1, 4-8-08; Ord. No. 2009-08, § 3, 1-13-09)

### **Sec. 54-415. Regulations for signs within all other districts.**

In all other districts, only the following signs shall be permitted:

a. Freestanding signs shall be permitted as follows:

1. For a development containing three (3) or fewer business units, one (1) monument sign shall be permitted as follows:

(a) No sign shall exceed forty (40) square feet per face or eighty (80) square feet of total sign face area.

(b) No sign shall exceed twelve (12) feet in height.

(c) Monument signs may be illuminated internally or with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. Plastic face signs shall have opaque backgrounds allowing only the text and logos to illuminate.

**GRAPHIC LINK:** [Click here](#)

2. For a development containing more than three (3) business units and fewer than twenty (20) business units, one (1) monument sign shall be permitted as follows:

(a) No sign shall exceed sixty (60) square feet per face or one hundred and twenty (120) square feet of total sign face area. No sign shall exceed fourteen (14) feet in height.

(b) Monument signs may be illuminated internally or with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. Plastic face signs shall have opaque backgrounds allowing only the text and logos to illuminate.

3. For a development containing twenty (20) or more business units, or 150,000 square feet or more of floor area, one (1) monument sign shall be permitted as follows:

(a) No sign shall exceed one hundred (100) square feet per face or two hundred (200) square feet of total sign face area. No sign shall exceed fourteen (14) feet in height.

(b) Monument signs may be illuminated internally or with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. Plastic face signs shall have opaque backgrounds allowing only the text and logos to illuminate.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

4. When a development fronts on two (2) or more streets, one (1) additional monument sign shall be permitted per street; provided however, said street(s) have driveway access. These signs shall be permitted as follows:

- (a) Additional sign(s) shall not exceed thirty-five (35) square feet per face or seventy (70) square feet of total sign face area.
- (b) Additional sign(s) shall not exceed ten (10) feet in height.
- (c) Additional sign(s) may be illuminated internally or with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. Plastic face signs shall have opaque backgrounds allowing only the text and logos to illuminate.

5. Special provisions for freestanding signs:

(a) Menu boards which are constructed as a part of a drive-thru service are not deemed to be freestanding signs.

(b) Instructional signs which are constructed as part of a self-service use are not deemed to be a freestanding sign.

(c) Reader boards shall be permitted as follows:

- 1. Reader boards are allowed as a part of a monument sign only and are not to be used as facade signs.
- 2. With the exception of public schools, reader boards shall not exceed fifty (50) percent of the allowable sign face area.
- 3. Reader boards are not to be internally illuminated.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

b. Façade Signs shall be permitted as follows:

- 1. Sign faces shall not occupy more than ten (10) percent per façade of the building.
- 2. Where more than one (1) business or use occupies a single building, each separate business occupying a space which includes an exterior façade may erect signage whose sign faces shall not occupy more than ten (10) percent per façade of the separate business entity; provided, however, that the total signage per façade for the business entities occupying the single building shall not exceed the ten (10) percent coverage requirement.
- 3. Where a business or use occupies an interior space of a single building, said business or use may erect signage on an exterior façade of the single building provided the total signage per building façade shall not exceed the ten (10) percent coverage requirement.
- 4. With the exception of a building façade fronting a public street or public right-of-way, façade signs shall be limited to those façades which have a building entrance accessible to the general public or pedestrian.

c. Window signs shall be permitted as follows:

- 1. In addition to signage permitted under "Façade Signs," window signs may be displayed provided no more than twenty (20) percent of any single window area is covered by such signage.
- 2. Window signs are to be limited to ground floor windows and/or businesses.

d. Awning and Canopy Signs shall be permitted as follows:

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

- 1. Awning and canopy signs shall not exceed twenty (20) percent of a single surface area of a canopy or awning.
- 2. Translucent internally illuminated awnings and canopies are not permitted.
- 3. Awnings and canopies shall fit over only the opening it covers and not extend across the entire façade.

e. Right Angle Signs for Individual Business Units: One right angle sign shall be permitted per business unit as follows:



**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

1. Right angle signs shall not exceed nine (9) square feet per face.
2. On a single façade, right angle signs are not permitted in conjunction with facade signs.

f. Right Angle Signs in lieu of a Freestanding Sign: One right angle sign shall be permitted, in addition to sign(s) permitted in paragraph d. above, per development as follows:

1. A right angle sign is not permitted in conjunction with a freestanding sign.
2. A right angle sign shall not contain any information other than the name, address or logo of the development or single tenant. A right angle sign shall not be used as a multi-tenant sign.
3. A right angle sign shall not exceed eighteen (18) square feet per face.
4. A right angle sign shall have a vertical dimension of no more than one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) of the vertical dimension of a building façade.

g. Wall or fence signs shall be permitted as follows:

1. Sign(s) attached to a wall or fence shall be considered a freestanding sign. One (1) wall or fence sign may be erected in lieu of a freestanding sign. When a development fronts on two or more streets, one (1) additional wall or fence sign, in lieu of a freestanding sign, shall be permitted per street, provided however said street(s) have driveway access.
2. The sign face of a wall or fence sign shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet in area.
3. Wall and fence signs may be illuminated with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. Internal illumination is prohibited.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

h. Sandwich board signs and pedestal signs shall be permitted as follows:

1. Sandwich board signs and pedestal signs within public right-of-way prohibited. No person shall place, affix, connect, attach, fasten, erect, construct, replace or maintain any sandwich board on any public rights-of-way in the city.
2. Sandwich board signs and pedestal signs on private property are allowed without a permit provided they meet the requirements as follows:
  - (a) Only one sandwich board sign or pedestal sign shall be allowed for any single building; provided, however, that where more than one (1) business occupies a building, each business may have a sandwich board sign or pedestal sign.
  - (b) No sandwich board sign or pedestal sign shall exceed twenty-four (24) inches in width or thirty-six (36) inches in height.
  - (c) Such property shall not be entitled to any other freestanding signage.

i. Kiosks or directory signs shall be permitted for multiple-use shopping, business, office and professional centers as follows:

1. Such kiosks or directory signs shall be for directory information purposes only.
2. The area of the directory sign or kiosk shall not exceed twelve (12) square feet per face and five (5) feet in height.
3. Directory and kiosk signs may be illuminated internally or with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. Plastic face signs are prohibited.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

j. Residential subdivision and multi-family development identification signs shall be permitted as follows:

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

1. Residential subdivisions and multi-family developments may have two (2) signs per entrance, which shall not exceed six (6) feet in height and twenty-four (24) square feet in sign face, identifying the name of the subdivision.

2. Residential subdivision and multi-family development signs are not to be internally illuminated.

k. Gasoline filling stations may have additional signs as follows:

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

1. Petroleum products and dispensers which are within view of a public way shall be permitted to display information required by law and in addition, the brand name and type of product being dispensed, so long as such signs do not extend beyond the face of the dispenser and are not illuminated.

2. The price per gallon may be displayed on each individual pump structure or island, as long as the characters do not exceed six inches (6") in height and are not illuminated.

l. Directional and warning signs shall be permitted as follows:

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

1. On-premises sign(s) shall not exceed four (4) square feet per sign face and three (3) feet in height.

2. Such sign(s) shall not be considered signs for purposes of computing the total number and area of freestanding, façade or temporary signs.

3. Such sign(s) shall not be illuminated; however reflective lettering may be used.

m. Institutional signs within residential, commercial transitional, gathering place and neighborhood districts shall be permitted as follows:

1. Freestanding monument signs shall be permitted as follows:

(a) Monument institutional signs shall be no more than six (6) feet in height and each sign face shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet.

(b) There shall be no more than one (1) monument sign per institutional use per entrance; provided, however, that in the case of a complex of buildings which house institutional uses, each building shall be allowed an additional monument sign no more than four (4) feet in height and twelve (12) square feet in area.

**GRAPHIC LINK:**[Click here](#)

(c) Monument signs may be illuminated internally or with a shielded spot light located at the base of the sign. Plastic face signs shall have opaque backgrounds allowing only the text and logos to illuminate.

(d) Reader boards are allowed as a part of a monument sign only and are not to be used as façade signs.

(e) With the exception of public schools, reader boards shall not exceed fifty (50) percent of the allowable freestanding sign face area.

(f) Reader boards are not to be illuminated.

2. Façade signs shall be permitted as follows:

(a) Sign faces shall not occupy more than ten (10) percent per façade of the building.

(b) Façade signs are not to be internally illuminated.

n. Off-premises signs shall be permitted as follows:

1. Off-premises signs are permitted only within the HI (Heavy Industrial) zoning district and only when the entire sign and sign structure is located within one hundred (100) feet of an interstate highway.

2. In this district, one off-premise sign shall be permitted per lot provided it meets the following requirements:

(a) Off-premises signs shall be separated from other off-premises signs along either side of the same street or thoroughfare by a minimum distance of one thousand (1,000) feet.

(b) Off-premises signs shall be separated from residentially zoned properties by a minimum distance of five hundred (500) feet.

(c) Setback of off-premises signs from property lines shall be at least five (5) feet.

(d) Off-premises signs shall only be located on high ground.



(e) Height and area of off-premises signs shall not exceed twenty-five (25) feet above the roadbed toward which the advertising is directed or thirty-five (35) feet above the ground, whichever is less, nor exceed one hundred fifty (150) square feet of advertising surface on one side.

(Ord. No. 1997-03, §§ 1, 2, 1-28-97; Ord. No. 1998-112, § 4, 5-26-98; Ord. No. 2005-95, § 2, 5-17-05; Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07; Ord. No. 2008-57, § 2, 4-8-08; Ord. No. 2009-08, § 3, 1-13-09)

Secs. 54-416--54-419. Reserved.

## **PART 4 NON-CONFORMING SIGNS**

### **Sec. 54-420. Non-conforming signs.**

a. Signs legally existing on the effective date of this ordinance that do not conform to the provisions of this Article, shall be considered non-conforming signs and may continue in use only as provided in this section. Provided, however, that this non-conforming use protection shall not apply to any sign established in violation of, or amortized pursuant to, the Zoning Ordinance previously in effect, unless such sign now conforms with the provisions of this Article. For the purposes of this section, the term "sign" shall include the sign face and the structure on which the sign face is attached.

b. Abandonment of use.

1. A non-conforming sign that has been abandoned shall be removed within ninety (90) days of written notification thereof, and shall not thereafter be reestablished, except in conformity with the provisions of this Article.

2. A sign has been abandoned if it is not being maintained as required by the regulations, or which is overgrown by trees or other vegetation not on the highway right-of-way, or which has had obsolete advertising messages or no advertising messages for a period of six (6) months, or for which a permit has not been obtained or is not current.

c. Restoration of damaged non-conforming signs.

1. Any non-conforming sign damaged by more than fifty (50) percent of its reasonable replacement cost at the time of damage assessment, either through neglect, deferred maintenance or normal wear and tear over a period of time, or by fire, flood, explosion, wind, hurricane, tornado, earthquake, war, riot, or other act of God, shall not be restored or reconstructed and used as before such damage, unless in conformity with the provisions contained herein.

2. If less than fifty (50) percent of the sign is damaged, it may be repaired and used as before, provided that such repair is completed within six (6) months of such happenings.

3. The percentage of damage shall be calculated by dividing the estimated cost of restoring the sign to its pre-damaged condition by its reasonable replacement cost.

d. Alterations to non-conforming freestanding signs. Any non-conforming freestanding sign altered by the modification of the size or shape of its cabinet(s) or frame(s) containing the sign face, or complete or partial removal of its cabinet(s) or frame(s) containing the sign face shall be made to conform to the provisions of this article.

e. Off Premises Signs. Non-conforming off premises signs shall be amortized and the non-conforming use discontinued as provided in Table 1.1, of this section, except, if the use of such off premises sign cannot be amortized due to its proximity to a federal aid primary road, interstate highway or national highway system road then the non-conforming off premises sign shall be discontinued if abandoned as delineated in 54-520(b) or if damaged more than fifty percent as delineated in 54-520(c) in which case

such non-conforming use shall be permanently ended and discontinued and the remaining portions of the off premises sign removed.

Amortization of non-conforming off premises signs not subject to protection by reason of its proximity to federal aid primary road, interstate, highway or national highway system shall be subject to the following:

1. Non-conforming off premises signs shall be removed or otherwise made to conform to the provisions of this Article within the number of years set forth in Table 1.1: Amortization Schedule, which shall begin to run on the date of enactment of this Ordinance.

2. The amortization period for non conforming off premises signs subject to this Ordinance by reason of annexation by the city after the enactment of this Ordinance shall begin to run on the date of annexation.

3. The amortization period set forth in Table 1.1 shall be conclusively presumed to have provided just compensation to the owner of the off premises sign and the owner of the real property on which the off premises sign is located for any property interest impacted by this Ordinance.

a. Provided, however, that if any amortization period is declared invalid and it is ordered or determined that the city is required to pay funds as compensation, that the city shall have the option to allow the off premises sign to continue in existence as a non-conforming use without payment of such funds until, in its sole discretion, the city determines that adequate funds exist to remove the off premises sign.

b. The failure of the city to remove any off premises sign shall not be construed as a waiver by the city to exercise any such rights in the future or demand strict compliance with the provisions of this Ordinance.

**TABLE 1.1: AMORTIZATION SCHEDULE**

TABLE INSET:

Original Cost of Off Premises Sign	Amortization Period from the Date of Enactment of this Ordinance or Date of Subsequent Annexation into the City
Less than \$1,000	1 year
\$1,000 - \$5,000	2 years
\$5,001 - \$10,000	4 years
\$10,001 - 15,000	6 years
\$15,000 and greater	8 years

(Ord. No. 1997-03, §§ 3, 4, 1-28-97; Ord. No. 2005-95, § 3, 5-17-05; Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07)

**TABLE 1.2: ALLOWED SIGN TYPES BY ZONING DISTRICTS**

TABLE INSET:

Zoning District	SH, RO	CT	GP, ND	HI, LI, GB, LB, GO, BP	All Residential Districts
Sign Type:					
Freestanding	12 sq. ft. per	12 sq. ft. per	Not	<= 3	<b>Institutional</b>

	side / 5 ft. ht. (plastic faces not allowed)	side / 5 ft. ht. (plastic faces not allowed)	Permitted	businesses 40 sq. ft. per side / 12 ft. ht. > 3 <b>businesses</b> <b>60 sq. ft. per</b> <b>side / 14 ft.</b> <b>ht.</b>	<b>uses only = 1</b> <b>sign =24 sq.</b> <b>ft. per side /</b> <b>6 ft. ht.</b>
<b>Additional Freestanding</b>	<b>Not permitted</b>	<b>Not permitted</b>	<b>Not permitted</b>	>>= 2 street <b>frontsw /</b> <b>drive access</b> 35 sq. ft. per side / 10 ft. ht. per additional street	Not permitted
Reader Board	Not permitted	Not permitted	Not permitted	50% of allowable freestanding sign face (no internal illumination)	Institutional uses only =50% of allowable freestanding sign face (no internal illumination)
Kiosk / Directory	Not permitted	Not permitted	Not permitted	12 sq. ft. per side / 5 ft. ht. (plastic faces not allowed)	Not permitted
Directional	Not permitted	Not permitted	Not permitted	4 sq. ft. side / 3 ft. ht. (no illumination)	Not permitted
Wall / Fence	Not permitted	Not permitted	Not permitted	2 per drive access, 24 sq. ft. (if used, no freestanding signs allowed) (no internal	2 per drive access, 24 sq. ft. (if used, no freestanding signs allowed)(no internal

				illumination)	illumination)
Sandwich Board	Not permitted	Not permitted	2 ft. wide / 3 ft. ht.	2 ft. wide / 3 ft. ht.(in lieu of freestanding sign)	Not permitted
Façade	Not permitted	1 sign per business unit = 9 sq. ft. (no illumination)	1 sign per business unit = 10% of façade (no internal illumination)	1 sign per business unit = 10% of façade	Institutional uses only = 10% of façade (no internal illumination)
Window	Not permitted	Not permitted	20% of ea. window (limited to grnd. flr. windows only)	20% of ea. window (limited to grnd. flr. windows only)	Not permitted
Awning / Canopy	Not permitted	Not permitted	20% of surface area (no illumination)	20% of surface area (no illumination)	Not permitted
Right Angle	Not permitted	1 sign per business unit = 9 sq. ft. per side (in lieu of façade sign)	1 sign per business unit = 9 sq. ft. per side (in lieu of façade sign)	1 sign per business unit = 9 sq. ft. per side (in lieu of façade sign)	Not permitted
Residential / Multi-family	2 per entrance, single face, 24 sq. ft. / 6 ft. ht. (no internal illumination)	2 per entrance, single face, 24 sq. ft. / 6 ft. ht. (no internal illumination)	For ND only = 2 per entrance, single face, 24 sq. ft. / 6 ft. ht. (no internal illumination)	2 per entrance, single face, 24 sq. ft. / 6 ft. ht. (no internal illumination)	2 per entrance, single face, 24 sq. ft. / 6 ft. ht.(no internal illumination)

(Ord. No. 2007-135, 7-11-07)